

Appointments to the National Economic and Social Council

Closing Date: 15:00 on Wednesday 21st February 2018

**State Boards Division
Public Appointments Service
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The Public Appointments Service (PAS), established under statute in 2004, provides an independent shared service in recruitment, assessment and selection to organisations across the Civil and Public Services. On 30 September 2014, the Government decided that the PAS should also be given responsibility for putting in place an open, accessible, rigorous and transparent system to support Ministers in making appointments to State Boards. Our dedicated website, www.stateboards.ie, is the channel through which the PAS advertises vacancies on State Boards. It is also the means through which accomplished, experienced and qualified people, including people who might not previously have been identified as available for appointment, can then apply to be considered for particular vacancies.

Appointments to the National Economic and Social Council

Location:	Dublin
Number of Vacancies:	4
Remuneration:	Nil. Travel and subsistence is paid at appropriate Civil Service rates where relevant.
Time Requirements:	4 – 5 half day meetings per annum; additional preparatory work/reading and follow up as required. Members may also participate on committees and working groups established by the NESC.

1. Background

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) was established in 1973 and advises the Taoiseach on strategic policy issues relating to sustainable economic, social and environmental development in Ireland.

The NESC was given a statutory basis under the National Economic and Social Development Office Act 2006 and is funded by the Department of the Taoiseach. In 2012 the sustainable development role of Comhar (the Sustainable Development Council) was integrated into the NESC. In meeting its remit on sustainable development NESC receives support from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

The NESC has a long record as the vehicle for multilateral dialogue between Government, employer, trade union and farming interests, more recently community and voluntary and environmental interests, as well as independent experts.

The Taoiseach appoints the NESC in accordance with the 2006 Act and the NESC (Alteration of Composition) Order 2010 (SI 603/2010), as follows:

- 15 - 20 members on the nomination of business and employer interests, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, farming and agricultural interests, the community and voluntary sector and the environmental sector;
- 4 - 6 public servants of whom at least one must represent the Taoiseach and one must represent the Minister for Finance;
- 7 - 8 independent members with skills, knowledge and expertise relevant to the functions of the Council as required by the legislation. **The four vacancies fall within this category.**

In line with Section 18 (14) of the 2006 Act, and long standing Government policy on board appointments, the Taoiseach shall as far as is practicable ensure an equitable balance between men and women in the composition of the body.

The Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach, chairs the Council. The Deputy Chair is an Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach.

The Council also works at international level with the national economic and social councils of other EU member states and is the Irish member of the European Network of Sustainable

Development Councils (EEAC). It is a member of AICESIS, the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions.

Details of the Legislative basis of the Council can be found [here](#).

2. Functions of the Council

It is the duty and responsibility of Council Members to contribute to the work of the Council and to the formulation of advice to the Taoiseach.

NESC's work has a number of important characteristics:

- Focus on a problem that is recognised by Government as challenging, and on which the civil society organisations can be a significant resource;
- Analysis and ideas that are rigorous, but also reframe problems in ways that allow the actors to see new possibilities;
- Analysis that explores the economic, social and sustainable development dimensions of issues and policies;
- Involves exploratory dialogue among key civil society organisations;
- Addresses the public system and institutional challenges facing policy, implementation, monitoring and learning.

Over the last five years or so the Council has focussed on addressing specific policy challenges, building up expertise in certain areas (housing, climate action, jobless households) and collaborating with relevant Departments and other policy actors.

Recent publications by NESC include:

- Moving Towards the Circular Economy in Ireland
- The Dynamics of Environmental Sustainability and Local Development: Aquaculture
- Housing Supply and Land: Driving Public Action for the Common Good
- Ireland's Rental Sector: Pathways to Secure Occupancy and Affordable Supply
- Wind Energy in Ireland: Building Community Engagement and Social Support
- Jobless Households: An Exploration of the Issue.

The most recent annual report can be found [here](#).

The Council has also approved a work programme up to 2019 comprising three themes:

- a) A Key Social Challenge: Low Work Intensity Households, Quality Tailored Services and Participation;
- b) Climate Change: Governance of the Low-Carbon Transition;
- c) Land Value, Land Use and Urban Development.

NESC adopts flexible operating arrangements that allow it to engage effectively with the diverse nature of the economic, social, environmental and institutional challenges that NESC explores. The Council's composition and working methods enable it to take on board data, a multiplicity of interests, opinions and actors on any issue and has the capacity to assess a variety of responses on complex policy issues. This can involve the use of working or project groups and structured engagements, for example, open policy debates and workshops.

Challenges differ not only in technical ways, but also with respect to the significance and knowledge of different kinds of governmental and non-governmental actors and, indeed, in the degree to which there is an underlying consensus on the nature of the problem and the approach to addressing it, or deeply divergent understandings on one or both of these.

The role of the NESC is less about securing consensus on major policy directions among

different sectoral interests and more about exploring responses to specific policy challenges with input from stakeholders and independent experts represented on the Council.

The Programme for Government specifically refers to policy challenges where long term thinking is as important as a structured approach to delivery and the need to combine an action plan framework for urgent problems with new approaches to addressing long term challenges. The Programme mentions housing and broadband, climate change, pensions and long term funding models for higher education and health. In addition to ongoing work, it is anticipated that the NESC will play a particular role in responding to the Programme for Government commitment.

Planning for the Future is a strategic priority in the Department of the Taoiseach Strategy Statement. The Statement highlights the many uncertainties arising in the international environment and the importance of devoting time and resources to thinking about and planning for the future. The Statement cites the Programme for Government approach and provides that the Department will play a key role in developing that process, including through the wider advisory role of the National Economic and Social Council.

Current membership of the Council can be viewed [here](#).

3. Person Specification

Applications are invited from suitably qualified people who will contribute to the work of the Council as set out above.

Essential

The successful candidate must demonstrate in their application evidence of:

- a strong strategic focus and an understanding of the policy environment in which the NESC operates
- evidence of knowledge of Ireland's strategic policies
- high level analytical ability, experience of critically evaluating policy options or advising on policy options
- a track record of contributing to national discourse
- the ability to contribute to the work of the NESC and the development of priorities for its work programme, including helping to identify any gaps in analysis.

Candidates must also demonstrate evidence of knowledge or experience of at least one or more of the following at an appropriately senior level:

- Social policy in Ireland and the EU
- Labour market and social security
- Energy and climate change policy
- Environmental challenges and the interaction with the human and physical environment
- Globalisation, trade
- Regional economic development
- Enterprise and Innovation Policy

Desirable

- Academic/research institution experience at an appropriately senior level
- Designing and/or implementing public policy at an appropriately senior level

- Peer-reviewed publication record
- Regulatory policy experience/knowledge
- Advisory/policy body membership

The Taoiseach shall have regard to the desirability for gender balance on the Council when making appointments.

4. Term of Appointment

The current Council was appointed in May 2017. In line with the 2006 Act, appointments to the Council will be for a period of between 2 and 5 years, subject to:

- The membership of any member of the Council may be terminated by the Taoiseach at any time, on the basis of reasons to be stated by the Taoiseach.
- A member of the Council may resign his or her membership of the Council by notice in writing sent or given to the Taoiseach, and the resignation shall take effect on the day on which the Taoiseach receives the notice.
- Members of the Council shall, subject to the provisions of this Schedule, hold office upon such terms and conditions as the Taoiseach may, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, from time to time determine.
- A Council member shall cease to be a member of the Council if he or she is nominated as a member of Seanad Éireann, is elected as a member of either House of the Oireachtas or as a representative in the European Parliament, regarded as elected to the European Parliament to fill a vacancy, or becomes a member of a local authority.
- The 2006 Act provides that a member of the NESC shall be disqualified from being such a member where he or she is adjudicated bankrupt, makes a composition or arrangement with creditors, is convicted of an indictable offence in relation to a company, is convicted of an offence involving fraud or dishonesty, or is disqualified or restricted from being a director of any company (within the meaning of the Companies Acts).

The 2006 Act provides that members are eligible for re-appointment to the Council at the end of their term.

5. Submitting your Application

Before submitting your application, please review the self-assessment questionnaire which can be found [here](#). This questionnaire is designed to help you in considering whether to submit an expression of interest - you are not required to submit the questionnaire as part of the application process. Not all questions are relevant to the role of a member of the NESC.

You should then consider carefully how your background and experience fits with the specific appointment criteria set out in the Person Specification section in this booklet. Please give careful consideration to the possibility of any potential conflict of interest that may arise if appointed to the Council.

Your submission should be made via the following link www.stateboards.ie together with your **Curriculum Vitae** and a **cover letter** (see Appendix 1 of this booklet for help with the online process).

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please take care when submitting your application. As the Assessment Panel will generally make its recommendation(s) based on consideration of the documentation which you submit, it is most important that you do the following:

1. *Ensure your Cover Letter (and supporting CV) clearly specifies how your particular background and experience meets the requirements of the Council position(s) specified in this booklet, and*
2. *That you fully answer any supplementary questions which are presented to you as part of our online application process.*

This will help ensure that the Assessment Panel is as informed as possible as to the basis for your candidature and why you believe you are a person who could potentially be appointed to the Council.

If you have any questions regarding the application process please email info@stateboards.ie.

6. Assessment Process

An Assessment Panel (the "Panel") will be convened by PAS to consider and assess the applications received by PAS. The Panel will:

- review and discuss the expressions of interest received against the specific appointment criteria for the role, as advertised in this Information Booklet;
- assess potential candidates further once they meet the specified appointment criteria by undertaking any or all of the following steps:
 - Consideration of the written applications; and/or
 - Meeting¹/conference call; and/or
 - Referee checks; and/or
 - Any other selection or verification method deemed appropriate (this may include PAS requiring statutory declarations from shortlisted applicants as to the bona fides of the qualifications and experience contained in their applications).
- arrive at a shortlist of suitable candidates to be sent forward for consideration by the Taoiseach.

Please note that the Public Appointments Service will not be responsible for any expenses incurred by candidates as part of our selection process.

¹ The Public Appointments Service will not be responsible for refunding any expenses incurred by candidates.

7. Confidentiality

Subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts, 2014, applications will be treated in strict confidence. All enquires, applications and all aspects of the proceedings are treated as strictly confidential and are not disclosed to anyone, outside those directly involved in that aspect of the process.

Certain items of information, not specific to any individual, are extracted from computer records for general statistical purposes.

8. Data Protection Acts 1988 & 2003

Should your name be forwarded to the Taoiseach for consideration, please note that your cover letter and curriculum vitae will be forwarded to the State Board Liaison Officer in the relevant department and may be retained for up to one year.

For further information on Data Protection please follow the [link](#)

APPENDIX 1

Submitting your application:

In order to submit your application, you should take the following steps:

1. Go to www.stateboards.ie.
2. On the bar at the top of the page click on "Available Appointments".
3. This brings you to a page with all our advertised vacancies. Select whichever position you would like to apply for (you are welcome to apply for more than one position if you wish).
4. On the relevant page please click on the "apply for position" button at the bottom of the page
5. This will bring you to a page on www.publicjobs.ie and, if you already have a publicjobs.ie account, will prompt you for your username and password. If you do not have an account you will be asked to create one.
6. Once you input your details you will be brought to a page where there is a prompt in the middle of the page which says "apply here". Click on the link to the online application form beside it.
7. A form will appear on your screen, some of the text boxes will be populated with information from your publicjobs.ie profile (Name, address etc.). You will need to complete the rest of the fields and enter your name and the date at the bottom of the form. Click on "continue".
8. You will then be brought to a screen where you should upload your CV and Cover Letter. These are required documents and your application cannot be processed without them. Once you have selected these and uploaded them, please click on the "submit" button at the bottom of the page.
9. You will receive an e-mail confirmation (to the address listed in your publicjobs.ie profile) to confirm that your application has been submitted.

You must confirm that you do not have any conflicts of interest or legal impediment which would be likely to interfere with your ability to play a full part on the Board. You must also confirm that you can make yourself available to attend meetings and to carry out the duties of a Board member.